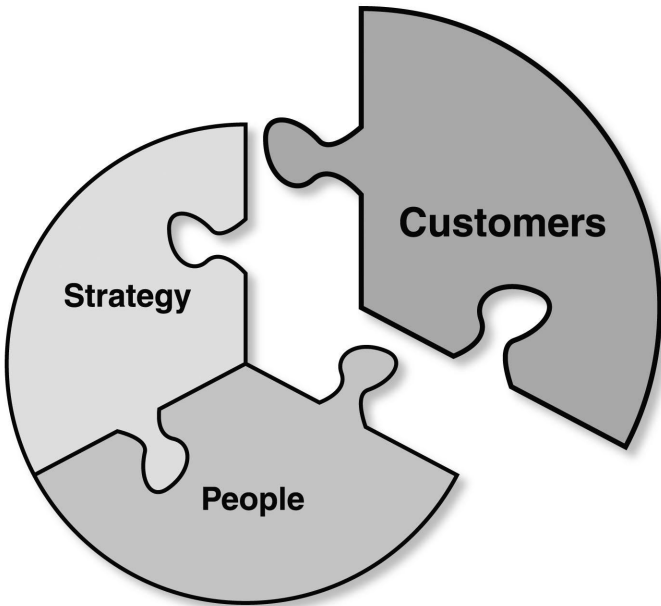


Section III

Customers

***“Motivate them, train them, care about them
and make winners out of them. We know that if we treat
our employees correctly, they’ll treat the customers right.
And if customers are treated right, they’ll come back.”
– J.W. Marriott, Jr.***



Customers. You may be thinking, “Why has it taken so long to get to a discussion about customers?” If you recall our puzzle, you can begin with any piece – Strategy, People or Customers. Which piece you begin with varies greatly based on where you are in the evolution of your organization.

When I started my business, strategy was my first puzzle piece, then customers, then people. By the second year, I focused on people first, then customers, then strategy. Entering my third year, it was customers, then people, then strategy. This is not to say this is what every organization should do, or that people and strategy are no longer important. Remember, all three pieces need continuous attention to achieve profitability and success.

Chapter 3 discussed the chicken and the egg in determining whether to include people or customers first in strategy. As Section II dealt with people, one can conclude we believe people should first be incorporated with your strategy, and then customers.

Section III presents a chicken and the egg of its own related to customers. Which comes first – market research, brand positioning or AL²A? The answer is similar to the puzzle in that it depends upon where your organization is at in its life cycle. A new organization should focus first on market research, then brand positioning, and then AL²A with its best customers. A market leader may first do AL²A, then brand positioning, then market research.

Section III focuses on finding and keeping the right customers, as well as introducing six steps to customer strategy. Chapter 8 focuses on determining the right customers and knowing your target market. Chapter 9 assumes you have done everything in Chapter 8, and relates to steps 1 through 4 of customer strategy. This involves determining all touchpoints, creating your brand and positioning, and prioritizing customers. Chapter 10 centers on step 5 of customer strategy about conducting research as a means to get to AL²A. Chapter 11 explains AL²A with Customers (remember this relates to

people and customers) and discusses ongoing measurement aligned with performance management (discussed in Chapter 7).

Read them in the order that is best for you and your organization. Although it is recommended to read all four chapters, as like the puzzle, regardless of where your organization's life cycle currently is, all elements needs to be continually completed or the puzzle is not effective.